

# SPORTS

## The Blazers Move on to a New Era!

### Preparing for the New Season

AP- The Portland Trail Blazers are moving on from the Damian Lillard era, turning the focus to a group of promising young players. But the specter of the seven-time All-Star still hangs over the team as it begins preparing for the new season.

Lillard, Portland's franchise player for the last 11 years, was traded to the Milwaukee Bucks last week in a flurry of moves by the Blazers ahead of training camp. What's left is largely a rebuilding project.

"It's a lot, it's definitely a lot. It's part of the business. Gotta keep moving forward regardless," said Jerami Grant, who at 29 suddenly finds himself the second-oldest player on the team. "We lost a lot of big pieces. We also got a lot of big pieces as well. So definitely looking forward to making it work."

Lillard was traded to Milwaukee to play alongside Giannis



Portland Trail Blazers guard Scoot Henderson on media day (AP photo/Craig MitchellDyer)

Antetokounmpo, ending a three-month saga over his wish to be moved to a contender.

The Blazers got Jrue Holiday in the three-team trade with Phoe-

nix that also brought Deandre Ayton to Portland. Jusuf Nurkic, Nassir Little, Keon Johnson and Grayson Allen were sent to the Suns. the Blazers traded Holiday

to the Celtics for center Robert Williams and veteran Malcolm Brogdon, who at 30 is now the oldest player on Portland's roster.

"It definitely didn't feel real, seeing him in a Bucs jersey, but I hope he gets to achieve the goals that he wants to over there," guard Anfernee Simons said about watching Lillard, his mentor, with his new team. Lillard asked the Trail Blazers for a trade on July 1, intent that he wanted to chase an NBA championship — which likely wasn't going to happen in Portland given the Blazers failed to bring in another transformative player over the summer. He voiced his desire to go to Miami, but a deal never materialized.

Lillard obviously will be missed: He averaged 32.2 points last season and has averaged at least 24 in each of the last eight seasons. He became just the seventh player in NBA history to score more than 70 points in a game when he finished with 71 against the Houston Rockets on Feb. 26. Portland general manager Joe Cronin addressed reports that Lillard was willing to come

back to the Blazers for camp and the start of the season but that Cronin nixed the idea.

"I told him I personally thought it was a bad idea. The trade request has not been rescinded and for me I didn't want that to go into the season. I thought, 'Well, let's just find something now instead,'" Cronin said. "And that was my approach, just to do what's best for us and find the best deal where hopefully we could all be happy. We feel like we accomplished that."

Portland won only four playoff series in Lillard's 11 seasons, getting to the Western Conference Finals once. The team went 33-49 last season, the second consecutive year of finishing well outside the playoff picture. His heir apparent on the Blazers' roster appears to be Scoot Henderson, whom Portland took with the No. 3 overall pick in the June draft. "I don't feel no pressure on me trying to be the new Dame. I'm not trying to be a new Dame. It's a new era for a reason. So I'm here to be Scoot Henderson," he said.

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